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WASHINGTON'S 9TH DISTRICT

Pre-Apprenticeship Wrap-Around Support Services Fund Act

Rep. Adam Smith (WA-09)

Background: Pre-apprenticeships in the U.S. began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as industries saw a need for structured training due to growing demand for skilled workers. In 1937, the National Apprenticeship Act (Fitzgerald Act) set the foundation for modern apprenticeships, including pre-apprenticeships, by creating standards and promoting program development across industries.

Recently, pre-apprenticeship programs have focused on being more inclusive by welcoming individuals from diverse backgrounds thanks to support from federal and state initiatives. Today, these programs offer practical learning experiences, often in partnership with high schools and community colleges, to prepare students for apprenticeships. They are also aiding students in bouncing back from disruptions in in-person learning in 2020, especially those in Career and Technical Education courses.

The Pre-Apprenticeship Wrap-Around Support Services Fund Act will establish a new grant program to fund transportation stipends, pay for lost hourly wages, and cover certification costs for those enrolled in pre-apprenticeships. These grants will expand access to pre-apprenticeships, create new pathways to apprenticeships, and ultimately help hardworking Americans recover from the economic effects of the pandemic. The bill:

- Directs the Secretary of Labor to establish a new grant program which provides stipends to individuals enrolled in pre-apprenticeship programs.
- Allowable use of stipends includes costs associated with transportation, lost hourly wages, housing, childcare, and certification costs.
- Eliminates barriers many individuals face when attempting to complete pre-apprenticeship programs.
- Requires a report to be submitted to the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the House and Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate on the progress and outcomes of the grant program.

Some of the biggest barriers people face when entering and completing these programs are the costs of living expenses and fees associated with the programs themselves. The bill would help pre-apprenticeship programs remove cost barriers for students to obtain initial credentials needed to enroll in a Registered Apprenticeship and put them on a pathway to quality, high-paying jobs.